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ABSTRACT

This guide for high school students with disabilities addresses issues surrounding transition from high school to college and beyond. It notes that these transitions include three phases: (1) preparing for college, including preparations that occur in high schools; (2) staying in college, which requires numerous self-management skills; and (3) preparing for moving beyond college to a career. Planning suggestions are then given for meeting entrance requirements, maintaining good high school grades, utilizing any needed accommodations when taking pre-college examinations, completing college applications, finding financial aid, knowing what support services are needed, and attending college orientation sessions. Suggestions for the college experience focus on self-advocacy skills, self-management skills, study skills, use of support services, technology, and networking. Finally, suggestions for thinking ahead to a career cover academic and career choices, building a resume, and internships. A final section urges students to enjoy their college experience. Helpful hints and some suggested resources complete the publication. (DB)

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College: You Can Do It! How Students with Disabilities Can Prepare for College

University of Washington

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College: You Can Do It!

DO-IT How Students With Disabilities can Prepare for College

Some adults, because of their disabilities, have lives which do not include many of the experiences of their non-disabled peers, including attending college and obtaining a career. Increased awareness of the rights and contributions of individuals with disabilities has resulted in a growing concern about expanding their post-secondary options. This publication addresses issues surrounding transition from high school to college and beyond for people with disabilities.

Transitions from high school to college and careers includes three phases:

- Preparing for college, including preparations that occur in high school.
- Staying in college, which requires numerous self-management skills.
- Preparing for moving beyond college and to a career.

Plan

Getting to college involves thoughtful preparation. It is important to start as early as your sophomore or junior year in high school.

- **Entrance requirements**

Call the institutions that you hope to attend to find out about entrance requirements. Talk with teachers and school counselors. Complete this task by the first or second year of high school. If you are not able to meet specific entrance requirements during high school, consider attending a local community college to obtain the course requirements you are lacking.

- **High school GPA**

The grade point average (GPA) you obtain in high school may be an important entrance consideration at your college of choice. Work hard to earn grades that are as high as possible.

- **Pre-college examinations**

Pre-college examination (e.g., SAT, PSAT) scores may be important for acceptance into the college of your choice. Talk to a school counselor or teacher about disability-related test-taking accommodations ahead of time. Appropriate accommodations can help you maximize your efforts and demonstrate your abilities to their fullest when taking an exam. If you earn a lower score than you feel capable of, ask if you can re-take the exam.

- **Applications**

When sending an application to a post-secondary institution, you are essentially sending a portrait of yourself: your grades, coursework, recommendations, personal goals, and abilities. Take time to present a full, positive picture of yourself. Before you send it to a college, have someone proofread a draft and give you constructive feedback.

- **Funding**

Life in college is full of expenses, expected and unexpected. There are resources to assist with and, in some cases, fully cover costs such as tuition, books, rent, lab fees, assistive technology, and application fees. Start early and talk to teachers, counselors, offices of disabled student services, financial aid offices, and undergraduate support programs at institutions you wish to attend.

- **Support services**

Resources are not the same at each postsecondary institution. Knowing your needs and how they can be met is an important factor when selecting a college. Arranging support services in college can take a lot of time, depending on the services you need and the resources available.

- **Transition and orientation**

Ask your high school counselor about transition programs that can help prepare you for college. Also find out if the college you've selected offers an orientation program for new students.

Go

Being in college means managing a demanding schedule. It is important to develop and utilize personal skills in the areas of self-advocacy, self-management, and study.

- **Self-advocacy skills**

Self-advocacy skills include knowing how to skillfully initiate action and interact with faculty, staff, and other students to obtain support services necessary for your learning needs. If you require accommodations, you are the one who must recognize the need, make the initial contacts, follow up on these contacts, and maintain the necessary actions to receive the services needed.

- **Self-management skills**

Self-management skills include planning your academic and personal schedule and developing and maintaining academic and personal routines that are reasonable and manageable on a daily basis. Take into account your abilities and strengths as well as your disabilities. For some individuals, strength and ability may vary daily – flexibility may be an important factor.

- **Study skills**

Study skills involve knowing how to effectively study academic materials. They entail developing effective strategies for note-taking during lectures and labs, reading, and test-taking. Development of each skill is important in order to have effective overall study habits. If your study skills are weak, ask a counselor if study skill courses are available on your campus.

- **Support services**

To be successful in college, many individuals with disabilities find it necessary to utilize assistance from campus offices as well as outside resources. An office of student disabled services can be a good place to start. Support services can be steady and continuous, or merely temporary. In many instances, a service that provides assistance requires ongoing attention. For example, to continue receiving some services updates on progress, status reports, and/or renewal requests may be required. Factoring these requirements into a regular schedule of activities will assure continuity of services.

- **Technology**

Computer and network resources are essential in many colleges and work settings. Adaptive technology makes it possible for people with a variety of disabilities to use these powerful tools. Take advantage of opportunities in high school and college to learn about and use computer technologies. Of particular importance is developing skills in word processing and information access for research purposes.

- **Networking**

Contacts with individuals inside and outside of your area can provide mutual assistance or support. Conversations, interactions, and

assistance from a broad range of people take place continuously during the process of preparing for college, attending college, and finding a career. Network through professional organizations, friends, family, and coworkers because who you know, as well as what you know, can determine your success.

Think Ahead

Working toward a career should begin early in your college life. Making prudent choices academically (e.g., choosing a major, selecting appropriate coursework, obtaining work experience) can assist you in making your career choices.

- **Academic and career choices**

College can prepare you for a career by providing:

- specific preparation for a specific career, and
- broad-based preparation for more possible career opportunities.

Seek advice from family members, teachers, school counselors, and career guidance counselors when making decisions about choosing a direction that is best for you.

- **Building your resume**

To begin building a resume, make a list of all relevant work experiences (paid and volunteer), academic experiences, and other activities. Seek advice from campus career advisors for selecting appropriate styles and formats of resumes depending on the type of job for which you are applying.

- **Internships**

The career placement office at the post-secondary institution you attend may have a number of contacts and opportunities in which you can participate. If internship opportunities are not available through campus services, make efforts to obtain other relevant experience for your resume.

- **Community support services**

For some individuals, the need for support services continues past college graduation. Which support services will need to continue and which ones need to be newly established will depend on specific job requirements. Early awareness of needed services will ease the transition from college life to life on the job. Some services can be secured internally from the employing organization and some can be provided by outside sources. Start early – this can be a slow process.

Have Fun

- **Social activities**

A social life is important. Make time in your schedule to socialize and get involved in extracurricular activities. Forming study groups is a good way to tackle challenging classes and meet new people. Joining campus clubs or organizations will help you connect with others who have similar interests.

Helpful Hints

The following helpful hints are offered by participants in DO-IT. Most of whom have disabilities and are in college or pursuing careers.

- Prepare for going to college.
- Work with the school you plan on attend- ing ahead of time.
- Research all of your different options for colleges.
- Plan, organize, and evaluate your needs so that support service units can work together to make sure there are no gaps in assistance.
- Seek assistance from student service offices, such as Disabled Student Services, Career Services, and ooperative Education.

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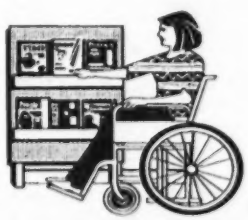
Helpful Hints Continued:

- Request aid from your professors. Don't be intimidated by them, they are there to help.
- Be realistic about the number of credits you take, especially the first quarter.
- Take some courses that look like fun, as well as more challenging courses.
- Take some time to enjoy the social life on campus – it is a good way to meet new people and make friends.
- Know yourself. Conduct an in-depth evaluation of your strengths, abilities, skills, and values.

Additional Resources



Useful resources are available from many organizations. A good starting point is the DO-IT home page at *http://www.washington.edu/doit/*.

Post-ITT (Postsecondary Innovative Transition Technology)
http://www.postitt.org
Post-ITT offer a comprehensive menu of online guidance activities for high school students with disabilities on self-advocacy, assistive technology, planning and applying to college, accessing disability services and adult human services.

Videotape

A 14-minute videotape titled *College: You Can DO-IT!* may be ordered by sending a check for $25 to DO-IT.

Grants and gifts fund DO-IT publications, videotapes, and programs to support the academic and career success of people with disabilities. Contribute today by sending a check to DO-IT, Box 355670, University of Washington, Seattle, WA 98195-5670.

Your gift is tax deductible as specified in IRS regulations. Pursuant to RCW 19.09, the University of Washington is registered as a charitable organization with the Secretary of State, State of Washington. For more information, call the Office of the Secretary of State, 800-322-4483.

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